

Northbrook, IL - With the new Congress starting its work tomorrow, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk outlined key congressional reforms to be made including ethics upgrades, spending restraint, changes to No Child Left Behind and expanding health care insurance. "The people of northern Illinois clearly want the new Congress to build bipartisan alliances to make these reforms. As the Chairman of the republican moderates, I will build partnerships with key Democratic leaders to make this Congress a success," said Congressman Kirk.

Kirk's top priorities included ethics reforms to cancel the pension of any Member of Congress convicted of a felony and new disclosure requirements for Members who meet with registered lobbyists. "This election sent a message that we must upgrade the ethics rules of Congress," said Kirk. "Speaker-elect Pelosi and outgoing Speaker Hastert both supported my legislation to end congressional pensions for representatives convicted of a felony." Under Illinois law, representatives in Springfield and state-wide office holders already lose their state pensions if convicted of a crime.

Kirk also emphasized the need for spending cuts. "We should cut spending on a number of outdated federal programs, permanently kill the 'bridge-to-nowhere', enact limits on pork-barrel projects and reinstate 'pay-as-you-go' budget rules. This spring, we will also consider a new Farm Bill and I will lead the fight to kill the wasteful Sugar Program," said Kirk who also opposes increased taxes on Americans. "The record of past is clear – whenever Congress increased taxes, it increased federal spending even more. The key to a balanced budget is spending restraint."

Kirk highlighted two key domestic priorities – reforms to the No Child Left Behind Act and new legislation that would allow Americans to keep their health insurance for life. "After five years of classroom testing, we know what reforms must be made to fix the problems of the No Child Left Behind Act. I will introduce bipartisan legislation – backed by the National Education Association – that will make needed reforms while preserving the rights of parents to know how their son or daughter is performing in school." Kirk will also reintroduce the COBRA Health Insurance for Life Act (H.R. 5740 in the 109th Congress) that would protect the right of Americans who have health insurance to keep it, no matter what happens to their employment.

Kirk concluded by focusing on key local priorities, including the environmental restoration of Waukegan Harbor, the building of a new VA/Navy hospital and the expansion of Metra commuter rail. "During this Congress, we will complete funding for the harbor cleanup and the new VA hospital. The challenge will be to ensure funding for Metra's new STAR line to reduce

suburban gridlock.”

Despite the shift from Republican to Democratic control, Kirk will retain his seniority on the powerful House Appropriations Committee. He is expected to become one of the most senior members of the Subcommittee funding the Justice Department where he will work to expand federal funding to eliminate suburban drug gangs.

Contact: 847-940-0202